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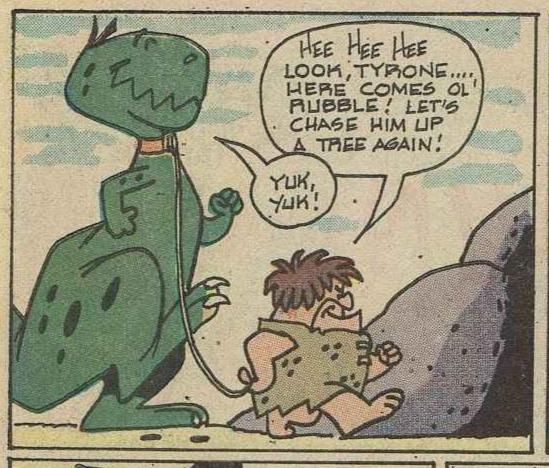






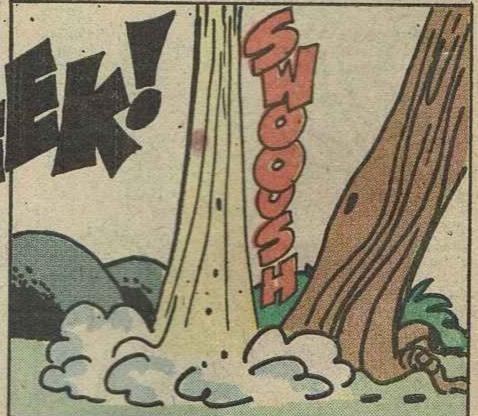


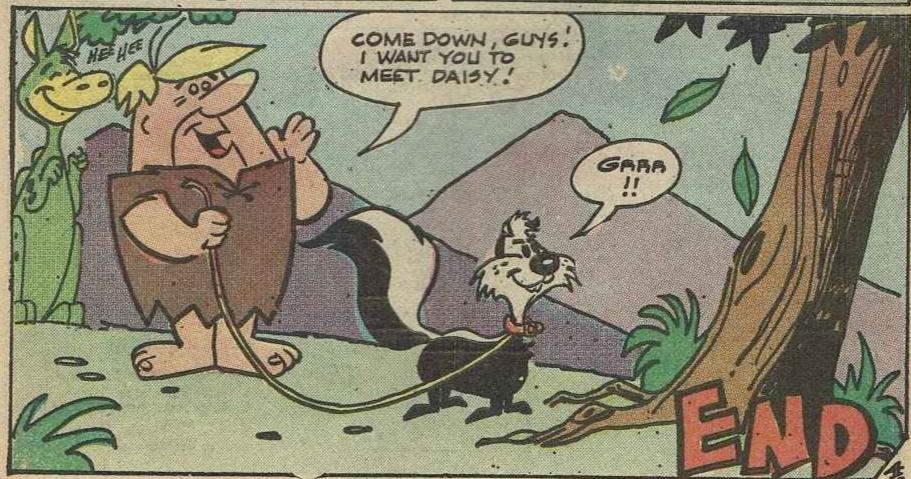














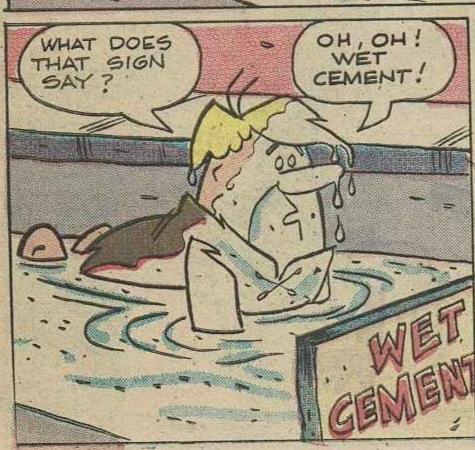












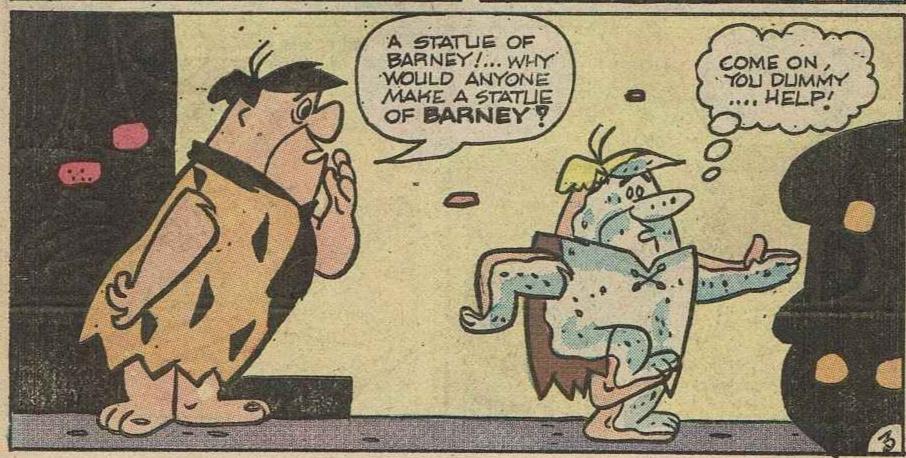




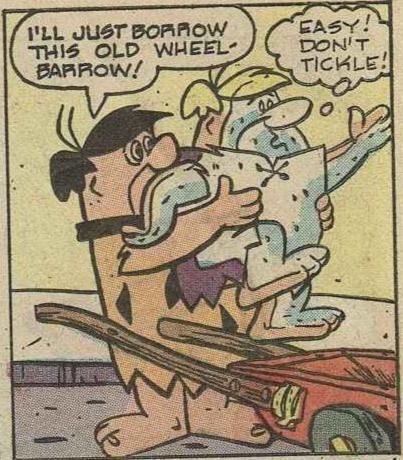


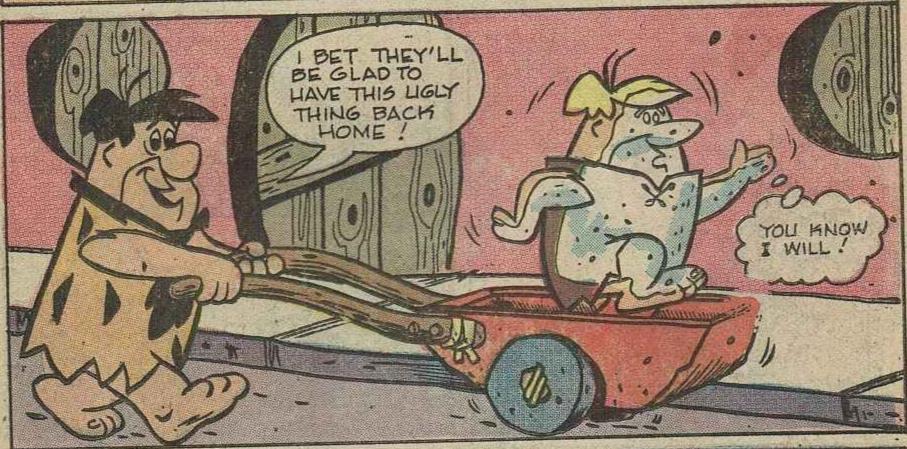
















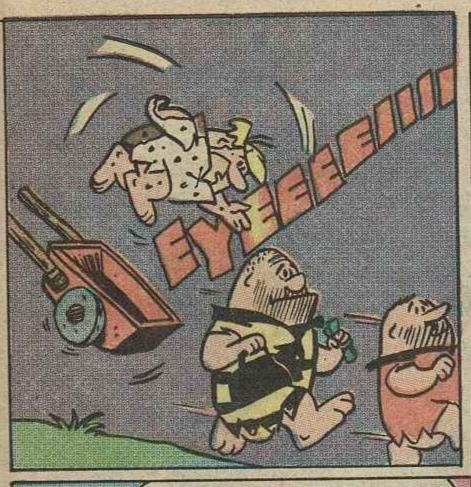


























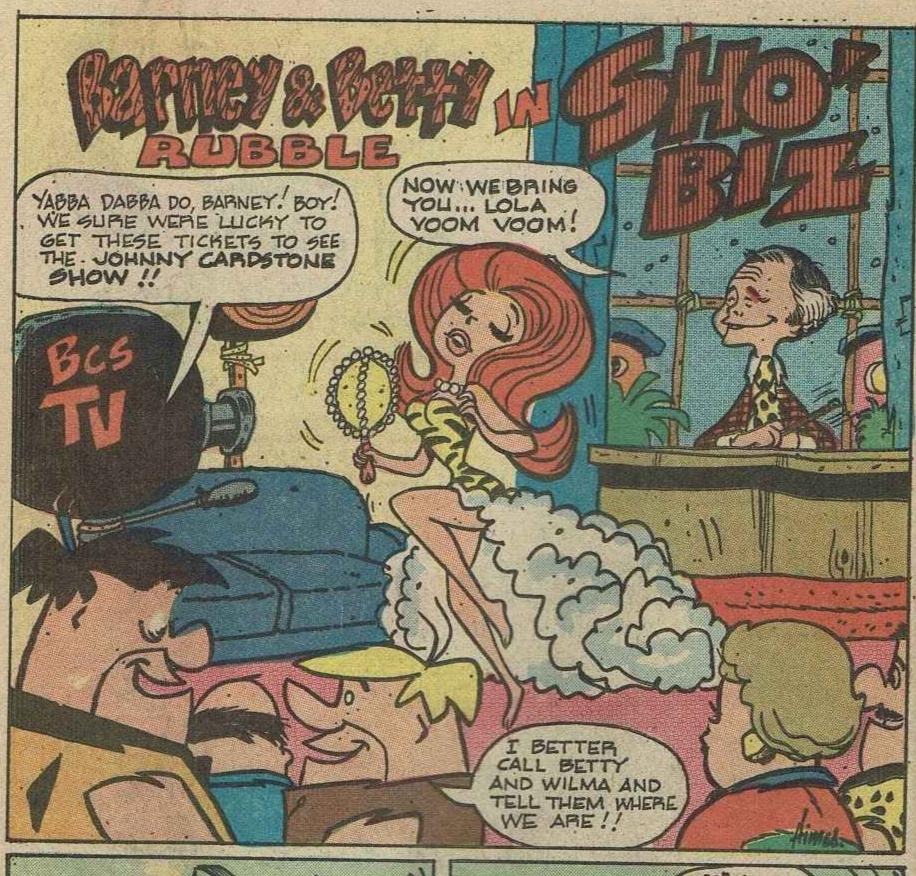






















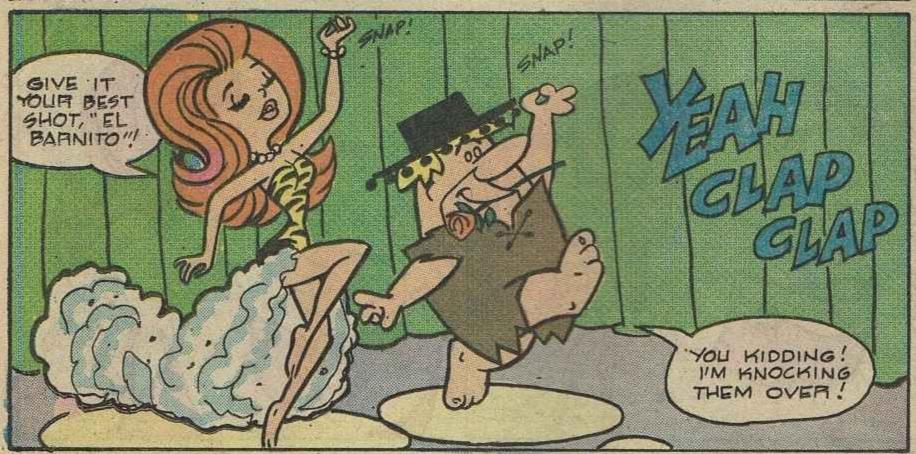






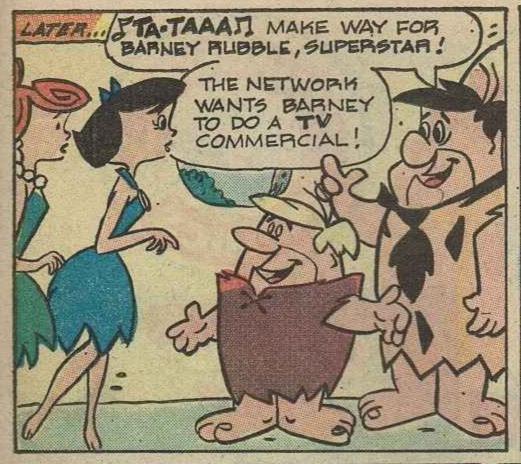








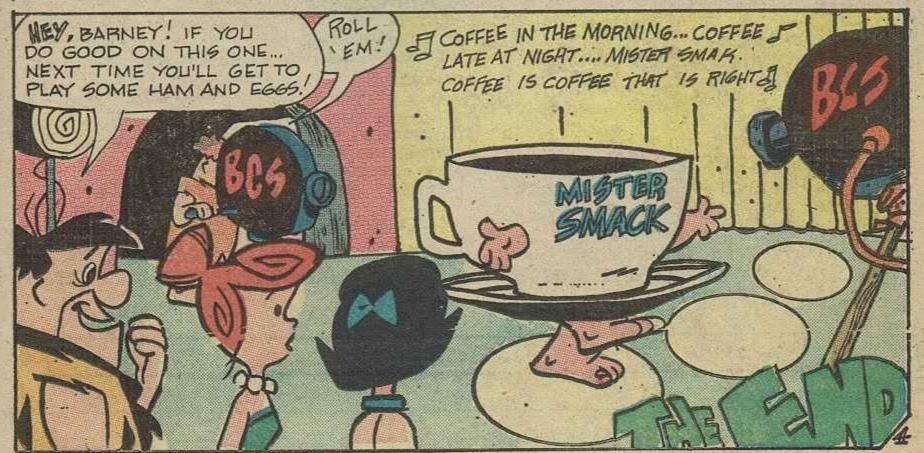














Many people believe that the smallest beings in the world are elves but this is not true. 'Bits' are actually the tiniest people alive. The average elf is four inches tall, as you probably know, but the fully mature Bit stands a mere inch from top to toe. Their stride is only a half inch long which makes it difficult for them to walk from place to place and so they usually ride upon the backs of insects. One such Bit was a pretty little thing called Leva, and she rade upon the backs of bees.

One breezy summer day, when the light green undersides of tree leaves exposed themselves to view, Leva, aboard her bee, flew over the elfin village of Brac. Just outside the village she saw a group of elf children playing. Being very fond of children, even of those over three times her size, she directed her bee to

fly roward them.

When the children first saw the bee, they ran in fear of the insect who they knew was armed with a sharp stinger; but when they saw the bee rider on its back, their fright disappeared.

"You're a Bit," said one little boy as he pointed Leva out to the others.

The bee landed in the boy's out-stretched hand as the children gathered in close to see the tiny creature.

In a very soft and low voice, Leva spoke to them.
"My name is Leva, and I want to play with you. I'm
real good at Hide 'n' Seek."

"My daddy told me," said a nasty little girl, "that Bits were lazy and useless and that I shouldn't speak to them. Leva was hurt by what the girl had said and didn't hesitate to try to correct her opinion. "It's true that we do not work, but it's not because we're lazy. We can't work because we're so small. We haven't the strength to do anything useful; but if we were bigger, we would help you elves to grow vegetables and build your villages. Unfortunately, all we can do is ride on the backs of insects or hang onto leaves as they glide through the air."

"Just the same," said the girl, "elves work and Bits don't. You're just trying to make excuses."

"You children don't work," said Leva angrily."But you're a grown-up," answered the girl, "and all grown-ups are supposed to work unless they're lazy."

Leva was silent. There was no way that she could make them understand.

"Lazy Bit! Lazy Bit!

All you do is sit and sit!" the girl chanted and the other elf children joined in.

Leva flew away in tears. She found an orchid, crept inside and cried herself to sleep with the children's cruel song ringing in her ears.

An hour later, Leva awoke to the sound of screams for help. Since she was still inside the cup of the orchid, she couldn't see what the screaming was about and so she called out to her bee who was hovering above her.



"Can you see anything?"

The bee nodded.

As she motioned to the bee to lower itself into the cup so that she could climb on its back she said: "Let's ap find what the trouble is about."

In seconds she was flying toward a stream that ran beside the elfin village of Brac. There she saw several elves on the shore desperately trying to toss a rope to an elf child who was clinging to a rock in the stream. Obviously, the child had fallen into the stream; and the swift currents had carried her away.

Over and over again they threw the end of the rope toward her, but it always fell short.

"Isn't there anyone strong enough to toss the rope to her?" cried the child's mother.

"I am not strong," said Leva," but I can get the rope to her."

"How?" asked an elf called Lok. "The rope is too heavy for you to carry."

"If you tied a string to the rope, I could fly the string over to her; and then she could pull on the string until she had the rope," Leva explained.

"It might work," said Lok and he turned to his nephew, Kin." You usually carry string in your pocket. Give me all that you have."

Kin surrendered his strings which Lek tied together into one long string and then gave an end to Leva. As soon as she had the string clasped in her tiny finger, she commanded her bee to fly toward the nearly drowned child.

Once during the flight, the string became snagged on a branch which jutted out of the water and as hard as Leva tugged on it, the string wouldn't come loose. All seemed lost; but Leva flew to the branch and saw where a knot had caught itself on the branch and she was able to lift the knot over the branch.

She continued her flight until she had reached the child.

"Why!" Leva exclaimed, "you're the girl who said those terrible things to me this morning."

"I won't ever tease you again," premised the girl. "I see now that even the smallest people in the world can be useful."

Leva smiled kindly, for she held no grudge. The child's meanness had been taught to her by her parents, but now they had all learned a lessen.

The elves of Brac told everyone in the forest of how a Bit saved one of their children from drawning.

